Glossary to Support Grant Reporting

We know that there are substantial differences in the way IMLS's communities use some words, and in the familiarity of many in the library or museum world with the vocabulary of the other discipline. IMLS hopes to help strengthen reporting, in particular IMLS's ability to compare programs and combine information, by providing definitions for words commonly used in our report forms and our agency reporting.

The attached glossary is based on glossaries used for IMLS initiatives, but it simplifies some definitions and uses as little jargon as possible. Many definitions are specific to our grant programs, and many are based on definitions provided by a simple Web or dictionary search, but none are direct quotes from a published source. Many words have more than one meaning, and the definitions in this glossary are not meant to be limiting or exhaustive. These are provided as a guide to the meanings that IMLS staff typically apply in the context of services and activities IMLS communities and grantees typically undertake.

Abstract. A brief overview of the content, especially highlights, of a paper, article, report, or other work.

Access, accessibility. (1) The right to obtain or make use of or take advantage of something (as services, membership, experience, or information). (2) The ability and means to communicate with or otherwise interact with a system: a specific type of interaction between a subject and an object that results in the flow of information from one to the other.

Accomplishments. In the context of IMLS interim or final reports, achievements or benchmarks that show substantive progress towards project goals, or provide evidence that the project's goals have been met

Activity, activities. Actions through which the objectives and goals of a grant are accomplished and deliverables are created.

After-school. A generic term for activities of individuals in student age cohorts, not associated with formal classroom or home-schooling activities, with the implication of following those activities in time.

Anecdote. A brief description of an interesting occurrence, not necessarily based on fact or objective information.

Assessment. A formal process to determine the relevance, effectiveness, and results of activities systematically and objectively in light of their objectives. In this context assessment

is a synonym for evaluation, which see. Assessment can focus on structure, process, outcome, and/or impact.

Audience. The people who will use, visit, participate, or otherwise experience the service, product, environment, information, or other grant deliverable. See also target audience.

Benchmark. A sign or marker selected to show that an objective or goal was achieved. Benchmarks are often expressed as a number and/or a percentage of a whole.

Catalog. To apply standardized descriptive information and/or apply such information in a standardized format to items or groups of items in a collection for purposes of intellectual control, organization, and retrieval.

Collection. A group of objects or works to be seen, studied, or kept together, as in a library or digital library collection or a painting collection.

Community. A group related by geographic, physical, or physiological proximity or interaction, most often of living things.

Community organization. An organization, agency, institution, or other entity, usually governed by a formal charter or purpose, that represents or exists to meet the needs of a community. In this context community most often meets the definition of geographic or physical proximity.

Computerize. An older, less-used term for creating or transferring sound-, image-, or text-based objects, files, or documents to an electronic, magnetic, other format that can be read by a computer.

Conservation. (1) In the context of non-living collections, the discipline of physically altering the physical or chemical condition of an object, collection, structure, building, or site to repair or delay damage. (2) In the context of living collections, the discipline of intentionally changing the environment or other factors in the well-being of a living thing or system to produce desired conditions.

Conservation survey. A systematic, written assessment of condition, conservation, and/or preservation needs of a living or non-living collection.

Conserve. In (1) in the context of non-living collections, to apply one or more physical treatments to an object to slow deterioration or repair damage. (2) In the context of living collections, to intervene by acting or not acting in one or more ways to improve health, life expectancy, or other desirable conditions.

Curriculum. A systematic outline of related educational or learning experiences, often in a specific field of formal study, such as a state-mandated history curriculum, or for a specific educational, training, or learning goal.

Curriculum resource. An object, sound recording, moving or still image, text, or other tool or item provided in any format to support teaching and learning based on a curriculum.

Deliverable. A completed process, product, or learning experience or other entity specifically promised or strongly implied by a project's award agreement to satisfy the purpose of a grant. Examples include number of participants or users, their outcomes, research findings, publications or other products, improved processes, or a wide variety of other accomplishments beyond the activities or processes that project staff carried out to achieve the project's goals.

Design. A clear specification for the structure, organization, or other framework for a program, service, product, or other deliverable of a grant.

Digital. For this purpose, computer-mediated experiences, programs, or products intended to support learning or other activities, locally or via the Internet or World-Wide Web. The term includes commercial or non-commercial hardware, software, data transfer connections and protocols, systems at any scale, and metadata.

Digitize. Create, record, or convert visual, textual, and/or sound phenomena in binary code for access or transmission by machine.

Education. (1) The process or experience of formal and/or informal learning in general or specific to a body of knowledge. (2) The formal process of transferring, fostering, and/or instilling knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors. See *training* for comparison.

Educational experience, event, or program. A structured set of experiences that intends to create learning for individuals who participate.

Electronic. See digital. This term can include video, sound, or other engineered formats that pre-date digital technologies.

Emergency plan. In the context of libraries, museums, and other institutions that hold collections, records, and/or information of value to users, a systematic, written plan to reduce the risk of damage or loss to those holdings, and to respond in the event of anticipated or unexpected events that threaten or cause damage or loss.

Evaluation. A formal process that tries to determine the relevance, effectiveness, and results of activities systematically and objectively in light of their objectives. Evaluation can focus on structure, process, outcome, and/or impact. The word *evaluation* may be modified to show when it is undertaken and its particular interest, as in *outcomes-based* evaluation, *front-end* evaluation, *formative* evaluation, *summative* evaluation, or *process* evaluation, and many more. A variety of approaches are often combined to shape and understand an initiative. See definitions of italicized terms in this glossary for additional information.

Evaluation plan. Used loosely, this term indicates a written description of the focus, methods, and other elements of evaluation for a project or program. In IMLS usage, an

evaluation plan is interchangeable with *logic model* if it contains the same content and serves as a base for program design decisions.

Exhibit. A formally structured display of any size, usually including multiple items related by a theme or educational objective.

Experience. An umbrella term that usually refers to the use of a product or to a happening or occurrence intentionally structured to change the condition or environment of an individual or group.

Field. A subject area or branch of knowledge or practice.

Finding aid. A tool through which users locate items of interest in a collection, based on information assigned through organized, standardized cataloging or description.

Finding(s). Interpreted information from formal, systematic assessment, evaluation, or research. Findings make sense of collected data; they can be formally or informally reported.

Formal. (1) In *partnership*, a relationship defined by written specifications and/or agreements signed by partners. (2) In *education*, a systematic series of related experiences and resources intended to produce results within an established set of criteria for all who learn, most often in a classroom or similar setting. (3) In *evaluation*, procedures, information, or instruments consistently applied and/or analyzed to understand results, normally presented in a systematic report.

Formative evaluation. The formal process of testing representative audience or users' responses to or learning from a product, experience, or process. Formative evaluation is usually done using a mock-up, or prototype, or preliminary version of a product, process, or experience; it is intended to compare the quality of several versions or to validate a selected version.

Front-end evaluation. A term developed in *visitor studies*, this usually describes a formal process intended to provide information about what anticipated or targeted visitors feel, believe, and/or know about a subject, to inform the development of an exhibit or a learning experience. Front-end implies that this process is carried out early in the evolution of a product or process, before changes become difficult or expensive to implement.

Goal. A broad statement describing a desired result for an organization, a grant, or an audience. A goal is broader than an objective; accomplishment of one or more objectives contributes to achievement of a goal.

Group. A collection of entities, usually more than three.

Hit. A record of user connection to a Web site, page, link, or other Web-based item.

Impact. A large-scale and/or long-term result that affects one or more institutions, communities, or fields. Impact may incorporate changes in context, environmental conditions, or other circumstances.

Individual. A single entity, one of something.

Informal. (1) In *partnership*, a relationship defined by casual, often oral, agreements among partners. (2) In *education*, usually voluntary, often short-term experiences and resources intended to produce results that may fall within an established set of criteria or may vary very widely among participants or users. (3) In *evaluation*, an often subjective process based on observation of a small group of people or a general overview of events or processes.

Information management. In current use, structures, tools, catalogs, coding systems, sorting mechanisms, or other systems to organize a volume or body of information for efficient, convenient, retrieval or use.

Information analysis. In current use, structures, tools, or other mechanisms or systems that facilitate ranking, comparison, correlation, or other sorting strategies to create meaning from data.

Institution. An organizational body that receives a grant or is served by a grant's activities or deliverables.

Intranet. A self-contained electronic network to which access is intentionally limited to selected users, usually staff and/or members of an organization.

Item. An individual object, page, image, sound recording or other unit that makes up a collection.

Learning. Growth (usually a gain) in any dimension where experience mediates knowledge, skill, attitude, or behavior. IMLS does not limit learning to information-based categories, but includes cognitive, affective, social, physiological, kinetic, aesthetic, behavioral, and many domains. Learning is an individual phenomenon that happens through the vehicle of formal instruction or informal (but not necessarily unstructured) experience. Education, by distinction, is the process that strives to create learning.

Learning Tool. An object, sound recording, moving or still image, text, tool, or other item or structured experience provided to support formal or informal learning.

Lessons learned. Conclusions drawn from experiencing and analyzing challenges, successes, or inertia in a project, intended to inform a project's managers or others.

Logic model. A concise articulation of project intent and design that starts from key desired results, identifies representative measures that will show the extent to which project goals were realized, and builds a program to achieve the intended results. A logic model includes a description of the *target audience*, the *need* to be addressed, the strategies by which the

project will address the need, the *activities* and *services* that will implement those strategies, the resources and productivity needed to achieve the goals, the sources of information that will inform evaluation and the *methodology* evaluation will use, and a *target* for achievement. The term *evaluation plan* can be used interchangeably if it contains the same elements.

Methodology. In evaluation, a set of systematic and uniform procedures for collecting and analyzing information used to make design decisions and to understand project results.

Mission. The overall purpose of an organization..

Mission statement. A written articulation of the broad audiences and overarching purposes of an organization. It often includes broad methods by which the organization will achieve its purposes.

Need. The difference between desired conditions and the ones that currently exist for an individual, group, object, environment, or process; the reason most programs, products, or services are created.

Objective. A concrete statement describing what an organization, grant, or project is trying to achieve. Objectives are sequential or parallel steps necessary to reach a goal.

Oral history. A record made from the spoken recollections or interview responses of an individual. Oral histories may be in the form of sound recordings, moving images, and/or transcriptions to text.

Out-of-School. A generic term for activities of individuals in student age cohorts, not associated with formal classroom or home-schooling activities.

Outcome. In IMLS use, a gain or change in an individual's knowledge, skill, attitude, behavior, status, or life condition related to the purpose of a project. An outcome is a specialized category of result, usually produced through some form of learning. Outcomes can occur at any scale and at any point from immediate through long term. While outcomes can be positive or negative, positive outcomes are normally the intended result of library, museum, or related organizations' activities, products, or services.

OBE (**outcomes-based evaluation**) or **OBPE** (**outcomes-based planning and evaluation**). An umbrella term that includes program, project, or product planning *and* evaluation based on identified target audience needs, intended learning results, and formal measurement intended to provide information about the degree to which outcomes desired by planners are achieved.

Output. A measure of quantity (e.g. number or percent) or of quality (e.g. produced to a specified standard) of activities, products, or services.

Output-based evaluation. A set of principles and processes for evaluation intended to provide information about the degree to which a program or project has met its goals; e.g. the

extent to which the quantity or quality of services, the volume of users or participants, or the number of products matched the levels desired by planners.

Page hit, page visit. A record of user connection to a Web page.

Paraprofessional. In library use (1) this term usually indicates a person who does not yet hold a master's degree in library science or a closely related degree (e.g. information science) or (2) A position with responsibilities just below the level of those typically assigned to a professional librarian.

Potential audience. The individuals *theoretically* within the geographic, broadcast, discipline-based, institutional, or other possible grouping that could potentially visit, participate, view, use, or otherwise benefit from a museum or library event, experience, product, or service. For reporting purposes theoretical, those who could or might, is distinguished from actual, those who have done.

Partnership. A relationship between individuals or groups that is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal.

Pre-professional. A person who does not yet have a degree specific to museum or library services, but who intends to pursue a career in one or the other field, including associated educational requirements.

Preservation, preservation-appropriate. Any action that effectively extends the life or use life of a living or non-living collection, the individual items or entities included in a collection, or a structure, building, or site by reducing the likelihood or speed of deterioration. Preservation actions include planning, conservation treatment, preventive action to improve environment or otherwise reduce risk of damage or loss, formatting or reformatting to provide access without physical use of original objects.

Process. The steps or events, their sequence, their agents or mechanisms, and their associated costs to produce a desired product, experience, or other deliverable at any scale.

Process evaluation. The formal process of examining the steps or events, their sequence, their agents or mechanisms, and their associated costs to produce a desired product, experience, or other deliverable systematically and in detail. Its purpose is to provide information about cost, or to calculate return on investment, efficiency, or sustainability.

Product. An intellectual or physical thing or phenomenon deliverable by a grant. Products include outcomes, impact, books, evaluation or research reports, published or unpublished manuscripts or articles, findings, tools or instruments, promising practices, recorded images or sound, curriculum guides, workbooks, curriculum materials, objects, hardware or software, or other things created in an initiative. Intangible products may be represented by tangible ones, as in an evaluation report, or a moving image or sound recording.

Professional. In most library use, professional librarian or library professional indicates a person who holds a master's degree in library science or a closely related degree (e.g. information science) and who works in the library field. In museum use, this may indicate anyone in a long-term museum career path, whether or not he/she holds an advanced degree specific to museum studies.

Program. In evaluation use, a connected series of steps, services, products, and/or experiences constructed to achieve a desired result.

Project. An initiative for which IMLS funding was provided. The word project may be synonymous with program, initiative, or grant. Every IMLS final report should include key, significant information about the activities, audiences, challenges, successes, and results of the specific IMLS award it references.

Promotional activities. Announcements, public relations notices, advertisements in any medium, or other activities designed specifically to increase awareness of an institution or program, product, or service or to attract users.

Protective storage. Conditions, usually for non-living collections, that delay deterioration or reduce risk of loss. Protective storage can be for individual items, as in coverings or enclosures, or for collections, as in furniture, racks, spaces, rooms, or buildings.

PSA. Public service announcement.

Public information. Information provided in a place or form available to the general public, for example the IMLS Web site. IMLS will provide final reports from funded projects at www.imls.gov.

Public program. Learning opportunities provided for a target audience, including the general public. *other than* museum or library personnel.

Qualitative. Described primarily by characteristics, categories, or description, rather than by measurement.

Quantitative. Described by or based on measurement.

Record. The catalog, descriptive, or other official body of information created to represent an item, event, action or other documentation of an organization's or individual's existence in a specific context.

Reformat. Convert or reproduce visual, text, or sound records from one convention or code for storing information to another, usually one that is more current, efficient, stable, or easily used. For example, a letter hand written in ink on paper can be reformatted by hand copying, photography, microfilm, photocopy, or scan.

Rehouse. To apply or replace a covering, enclosure, furniture, space, room, or building with one that reduces the speed of damage or deterioration, or to relocate an item or collection to such improved conditions.

Result. In IMLS use, a consequence of a project or program, including outcomes, impact, outputs, or other forms of change, either positive or negative.

Role. A function filled by an individual, process, or other entity that contributes to achieving objectives, goals, or other results.

Scan. An electronic method of creating a digital version, usually of a two-dimensional print or graphic item. Digital versions of three-dimensional or sound-based items are created by related electronic technologies.

Search, searching. In the context of information resources for any purpose, the process of locating items that meet a specific need for information, education, training, or entertainment of a user. The most familiar use of this term now applies to tools such as search engines or other technology-mediated data sorters that process large volumes of information to provide a subset that matches a query submitted by a user.

Service. An experience, process, or product offered to an audience, participant, or user to create a desired result.

Strategic plan. A systematic, written plan to guide priorities, activities, services, and budgeting for an institution over a fixed period of time.

Stewardship. The responsibility, usually formal, for assuring that objects, entities, structures, buildings, or sites with confirmed or anticipated long-term value for learning or for the representation of cultural, natural, or intellectual heritage, are proactively protected from preventable damage or loss.

Summary. A brief overview of the content, especially highlights, of a paper, article, report, or other work. Often called an abstract.

Summative evaluation. A formal process, normally conducted at the close of a project or grant, or at the end of the period of initial implementation or use of a project's deliverables, that provides information about the project's process and results.

Sustainability. The capacity of an organization to continue to maintain, support, and/or continue to offer access to a product, experience, process, role, or a specified level of quantity or quality in one of these entities.

Target. In the context of an evaluation plan or *logic model*, the amount of difference or change that will satisfy project planners and managers that the project has achieved its desired results.

Target audience. A specific segment of all possible users, visitors, participants, customers, or other groups a project has identified as the key focus of its deliverable(s). A project could have multiple target audiences, but would identify important common and differentiating characteristics of each to verify the fit of need, deliverable, target audience, and desired results.

Tool. Many IMLS grants create or enhance devices or computer applications used in the performance of information retrieval, learning, or library or museum functions or operations. Such a tool may create, manipulate, modify, or analyze other programs; support recording or retrieving information; or otherwise improve or extend education, information, preservation, or access capacity. This term can include resources that are not computer-based. A manual of good practice may be a tool for improving a process or service.

Training. The process, usually formal, of transferring or instilling skills, attitudes, and/or behaviors for practice, in general or for a specific occupation or task.

Unique visitor or participant. The discrete individual visitor, user, or participant, distinguished from the number of visits, uses, or events attended. For some purposes it is important to know the number of different individuals who took advantage of resources or experiences, in addition to how many times resources or experiences were used.

Use. The act of experiencing, manipulating, or otherwise interacting with a program, product, or service.

Visit. (1) The physical presence of an individual in a museum, library, or other institution that makes information, objects, or experiences available on site. (2) A computer- or other technology-mediated connection to the resources of a museum, library, or related institution, often called a virtual visit.

Vision. (1) The hopes of an organization. (2) The ambition or end-goal of a project, program, or product.

Visitor studies. The professional specialty that focuses on assessment and evaluation in the context of museums and their exhibits, educational programs, and publications.

Web-based. Accessed through a computer or other electronic device using codes and connection technology associated with the World Wide Web, Internet, or an intranet

Web site. The basic unit of the World Wide Web, Internet, or an intranet. A page is an electronic document that integrates text, sound, images, and/or moving images into a single interface through . Any document that can be accessed by a uniform resource locator (URL) on the World Wide Web. A server that is connected to the Internet and is dedicated to serving Web pages.